



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 29, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd Austin
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
100 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

News reports indicate U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) recently selected Richard Torres-Estrada to serve in the newly created position of "Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer." As a 26-year veteran who served as the Director of the Air Force's Chief Information Officer Staff at U.S. Special Operations Command, I write to express my strong opposition to this decision, and to request that you provide me information pertaining to the selection of Mr. Torres-Estrada to serve in this capacity.

I am deeply concerned over recent reports indicating that Mr. Torres-Estrada has authored outrageous, offensive, and highly partisan social media posts, all publicly available. Mr. Secretary, are you aware that this "Chief of Diversity and Inclusion" has compared former President Donald Trump to Adolf Hitler, the man responsible for the extermination of millions of people, including six million Jews? Do you believe that any American president is comparable to Hitler, or that the United States Constitution is similar to the late 1930s German governing documents that enabled Hitler to take over that country unilaterally?

It sickens me that an individual who has expressed such blatant disrespect for America's highest office, regardless of who sits in that office, has now been hired by the Department of Defense in such an important role. In your view, what message does the hiring of someone who publicly insulted the Commander-in-Chief under whom they served just a few months ago send our troops?

In my view, rather than promoting unity and readiness, the selection of Mr. Torres-Estrada signifies an elevation of leftist politics at time when our nation stands deeply politically divided. Spreading the poison of identity politics into the fabric of the most mighty and lethal military on the planet, especially the United States Special Operations Command, is wrong and dangerous. As you know, our men and women in uniform swear an oath to serve and defend our great nation and are prohibited from publicly expressing partisan views. To subject our warriors to politically charged leadership is inappropriate and divisive.

MARIETTA OFFICE

246 Front Street
Marietta, OH 45750

(740) 376-0868

SALEM OFFICE

192 East State Street
Salem, OH 44460

(330) 337-6951

CAMBRIDGE OFFICE

116 Southgate Parkway
Cambridge, OH 43725

(740) 432-2366

IRONTON OFFICE

202 Park Avenue
Suite C
Ironton, OH 45638

(740) 534-9431

As a Member of Congress, I take my DoD oversight responsibilities seriously. In addition to a copy of the USSOCOM Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, I am requesting, within 30 days, a full briefing on the hiring of Mr. Torres-Estrada, including a copy of his background check and a detailed report specifically providing the following information:

- The justification for creating the position of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer and specified qualifications of the position.
- Full details on the background check performed on Mr. Torres-Estrada, including who performed the background check, the duration of the background check, and whether or not it included his offensive and politically charged social media posts.
- If his background check did not include his social media posts, a rationale for this serious oversight, and alternatively, a justification for hiring Mr. Torres-Estrada if they were included.

I care deeply for our men and women serving in our armed forces, and it's my sincere hope you will consider removing Mr. Torres-Estrada, who has clearly disqualified himself for any leadership role within our government. Thank you for your attention to my request. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact my Chief of Staff Mike Smullen at 202-225-5705.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress